R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 010 980 RE 000 017

A COMPARISON OF WHITE AND NEGRO NINTH GRADE STUDENTS' READING INTERESTS.

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PUB DATE FEB 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.48 12P.

DESCRIPTORS- *READING RESEARCH, *RACIAL DIFFERENCES, *SEX DIFFERENCES, *READING INTERESTS, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, QUESTIONNAIRES, NEGRO STUDENTS, CAUCASIAN STUDENTS, VOCABULARY, VERBAL INTELLIGENCE, GRADE 9, BIRACIAL SCHOOLS, *READING MATERIAL, SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES, BY RACE AND SEX, OF SPECIFIC STUDENTS ENROLLED IN TWO RECENTLY INTEGRATED HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES IS REPORTED. SUBJECT WERE 264 NINTH-GRADE PUPILS--140 NEGROES AND 124 CAUCASIANS. TO MEASURE READING INTERESTS AND CHOICE OF MATERIALS, A 40-ITEM QUESTIONNAIRE WAS CONSTRUCTED. SIX ITEMS MEASURED SOURCE OF READING, 34 ITEMS MEASURED READING INTERESTS. ANSWERS WERE CHOSEN FROM SIX CHOICES WHICH RANGED FROM LIKE VERY, VERY MUCH TO DISLIKE VERY, VERY MUCH. THE CALIFORNIA TEST OF MENTAL MATURITY, SHORT FORM, LEVEL 4, AND THE CALIFORNIA READING TEST, ADVANCED FORM, WERE ADMINISTERED TO ALL PUPILS. CHI SQUARE WAS USED TO DETERMINE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORDER OF THE RANKS. THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VERBAL INTELLIGENCE AND READING VOCABULARY IN FAVOR OF THE CAUCASIAN STUDENTS. EIGHTEEN ITEMS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE DIFFERED SIGNIFICANTLY. RESPONSES OF NEGROES APPEARED TO BE HEAVILY WEIGHTED IN POSITIVE-CHOICE CATEGORIES. CAUCASIAN REPONSES WERE MORE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED. NEGRO PUPILS EXPRESSED STRONGER CHOICES FOR READING CURRENT MATERIAL AND STRONGER INTERESTS IN SOCIAL RELATIONS, ROMANCE, TEEN-AGE PROBLEMS, HUMOR, AND OCCUPATIONAL AREAS. OTHER FINDINGS, TABLES, CONCLUSIONS, AND REFERENCES ARE INCLUDED. (BK)

RE000 017

ED010980

AERA, Division C
February 1967

A Comparison of White and Negro Ninth Grade Students' Reading Interests

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Explorations into the reading interests of students have been conducted by several authorities. (Witty, 1961; Strong, 1963; Vaughan, 1963). However, in certain sections of the United States where various populations of students have for the first time been integrated, it becomes a matter of necessity to investigate these areas. If there are wide differences in reading interests among recently integrated students, then some instructional planning and adjustment should be considered to meet these differences. Rowland and Hill (1965) reported in a recent study that interests of pupils, as measured by their voluntary selections in reading and the choice of topics in creative writing were influenced both by the racial content of the materials and the race of the child. Because of the potential impact of this information both on curriculum development and on the selection of materials it appeared that further exploratory study in this area was necessary.

The purpose of this study therefore, was to investigate similarities and differences, by race and sex, in specific reading interests and choices of types of reading materials. Ninth grade students enrolled in two recently integrated high schools in the southeastern part of the United States were selected for the study.

Subjects

The population used in this study consisted of the total ninth grade enrollment of two recently integrated high schools in a middle-sized southeastern city of the United States. The population numbered 264 ninth grade students, the Negro group consisting of 60 male and 80 female students. The Caucasian group contained 64 male and 60 female students.

Instruments

To measure reading interests and choice of materials a questionnaire was constructed consisting of forty items. Of the forty items, choice of the source of reading involved six items: reading newspapers, books, picture books, comics, poetry, and magazines. Thirty four items in the questionnaire measured reading interests which included such areas as: sports, world events, local interests, biography, humor, adventure, hobbies, topics relating to one's own sex, family life, personal problems, personal appearance, teen-age problems, jobs, romance, religion, occupations, animal stories, violence, social problems, clothing, styles in clothing, music, and others. Responses for each of the forty items were made by students based upon one choice out of six possible choices which they felt best described their feeling about the reading materials. The six choices were: (1) like very very much, (2) like quite a lot, (3) like a little, (4) dislike a lot, (5) dislike quite a lot, (6) dislike very very much.

All of the students in the sample were given the California Short Form Test of Mental Maturity, Level 4. (Clark and Tiegs, 1963), and the California Reading Tests, Advanced, Form W. (Tiegs and Clark, 1957). Significant differences were found between the two groups in verbal IQ and reading vocabulary with the difference in favor of the Caucasian males and females.

Analysis of the Date

Chi-square analysis of the responses to the questionnaire was employed to determine the significance of differences, if any, in choices of the various groups to the forty ~~four~~ items. The responses to the various items of the questionnaire were tabulated by rank order-response

among the groups by sex and race concerning (choice 1) and most liked and (choice 6) disliked very very much. Tables 1-3, describe the findings, of the study.

Insert Table 1 here

It can be noted from Table 1 that of the 18 significant chi-square values differentiating the two groups, two "choice" and sixteen "interest" items were found to be significantly different. The eighteen items significantly differentiating the two groups can be noted in the table. Inspection of the distributions of responses for the eighteen items, between the two groups, indicated that in each of the eighteen comparisons the responses of Negro students appeared to be heavily weighted in the positive choice categories. The white students' choices in each case were characterized by a significantly wider distribution among the choice categories for each of the eighteen items. No significant differences between the groups were noted for the remaining twenty-two items in the questionnaire. Negro students appear to have stronger choices for reading current materials such as newspapers and magazines, and stronger reading interests in such topics as social relations, romance, teen-aged problems, humor, and occupational areas than whites.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the rank-order of choices of materials and interests categories selected by sex and race in terms of most and least liked categories respectively. In general, it can be noted from the two tables that for this population with some exceptions sex appears to be more expressive of differences in choices of materials and interests than racial differences.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 here

Exceptions noted in Tables 2 and 3 include choice of books concerned with personal problems that appeared in "most liked" categories for both male and female Negro students but did not so appear for Caucasians. It was also noted in Table 3 that Negro students, both male and female, appear to rank magazines about men and women in the least liked category while Caucasians do not. Caucasian females rank as least liked books related to hobbies, and newspaper sports while these are not so ranked by Negro females. Caucasian males include poetry and music in least liked categories while Negro males do not.

Conclusions

Differences noted in descriptive variables between racial groups resulting from such factors as environmental and educational differences are frequently considered to be related to interests and types of reading materials chosen. Differences between the two racial groups in reading interests and choices of materials in this population of students have been noted in this study. In general, differences in reading interests between racial groups as well as sex differences were apparent in the findings of this investigation. Further study in this area, especially interest inventories of integrated groups from other geographic and socio-economic areas, should be undertaken. On the basis of the results of this study those concerned with curriculum planning should consider the desirability of making provisions for the differences in interests, and reading ability between the racial groups as well as the sex differences in reading interests within the two groups.

TABLE 1

ITEMS SHOWING A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE (.01 LEVEL) BETWEEN RESPONSES OF THE CAUCASIAN AND NEGRO STUDENTS

Items	X^2
a. reading newspaper	41.46
b. reading the comics in the newspaper	37.47
c. reading about things of local interest in the newspaper	20.54
d. reading books that are funny	21.98
e. reading books about women	39.28
f. reading mystery stories	42.21
g. reading books about family life	38.33
h. reading books with some romance in them	56.66
i. reading about sports	20.33
j. reading books about teen-age problems	40.65
k. reading books about jobs	34.48
l. reading animals stories	57.11
m. reading books about social problems	42.17
n. reading magazines	38.03
o. reading romance magazines	37.35
p. reading magazines about clothing and styles	27.23
q. reading magazines about women	32.31
r. reading detective magazines	25.31

TABLE 2

MOST LIKED

Negro (Female)	Caucasian (Female)
1. Magazines: clothing, styles	1. Magazines: clothing, styles
2. Books: teen-age problems	2. Books: adventure
3. Books: personal problems	3. Mystery Stories
4. Magazines: music	4. Books: general
5. Books: real people	5. Books: teen-age problems

Negro (Male)	Caucasian (Male)
1. Books: sports	1. Books: adventure
2. Newspapers: sports	2. Books: sports
3. Books: adventure	3. Magazines: sports
4. Magazines: sports	4. Newspapers: sports
5. Books: personal problems	5. Newspapers: comics
6. Magazines: jokes	6. Mystery Stories

TABLE 3

LEAST LIKED

Negro (Female)	Caucasian (Female)
1. Books: violence	1. Magazines: detective
2. Magazines: women	2. Books: hobbies
3. Animal Stories	3. Newspapers: sports
4. Magazines: detective	4. Animal Stories
5. Books: men	5. Books: violence

Negro (Male)	Caucasian (Male)
1. Magazines: clothing, styles	1. Poetry
2. Books: love	2. Magazines: music
3. Magazines: romance	3. Books: love
4. Magazines: men	4. Books: romance
5. Books: romance	5. Animal Stories

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SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

NORMATIVE DATA FOR 260 CAUCASIAN AND NEGRO NINTH GRADE STUDENTS

Variables	Negro Male N = 60		Caucasian Male N = 64		C. R.	Negro Female N = 80		Caucasian Female N = 60		C. R.
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.		Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	
Chronological Age	175.97	6.00	178.27	8.05	1.83	174.68	5.29	177.95	7.69	2.82*
Verbal I. Q.	89.78	9.61	94.36	14.34	2.10*	91.36	10.45	97.80	15.45	2.79*
Non-Verbal I. Q.	99.55	16.54	101.59	15.61	.71	99.80	15.43	101.70	13.54	.77
Total I. Q.	94.15	13.32	97.92	14.71	1.50	94.88	12.63	100.27	14.69	2.28*
Reading-Vocabulary	20.10	7.63	24.05	10.29	2.44*	18.90	6.57	26.65	9.83	5.27*
Reading-Comprehension	33.43	9.90	34.67	12.65	.61	31.99	8.48	38.95	12.25	3.78*
Reading-Total	53.70	16.34	58.72	21.51	1.47	50.89	13.51	65.42	20.33	4.80*

* p = .05